

VZCZCXYZ0002  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHPC #0553/01 2071607  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 261607Z JUL 07  
FM AMEMBASSY LOME  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8073  
INFO RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2162  
RUEHCO/AMEMBASSY COTONOU 3959  
RUEHOU/AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU 8885  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0588

UNCLAS LOME 000553

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

PARIS FOR GREG D'ELIA AND ROBERT KANEDA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [TO](#) [KDEM](#)

SUBJECT: TOGO: VOTER REGISTRATION LAUNCHES WITH SOME FLAWS

¶1. SUMMARY: Togo completed on July 22 the first week of voter registration to mixed reviews. Representatives from six political parties have worked collegially during the week to administer the registration process, and there have been no allegations of fraud. However, mechanical and logistical flaws have obstructed the process in some areas of the country. Nonetheless, with registration underway, public anticipation of a new election date is high. Although the Independent National Election Commission (CENI) announced that it would recommend the new election date after evaluating the first week of registration, it has yet to release new information about an election date. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Togo launched its voter registration on July 16, following a July 11 decree issued by the Minister of Territorial Administration establishing a one month registration period between July 16 and August 17. The registration scheme, designed by the CENI, divides 29 of Togo's 30 prefectures into two registration zones, with zone A using the first two weeks of the month (July 16-29) to register voters. The registration kits, which Togo has borrowed from the Democratic Republic of Congo, will then be moved from zone A to zone B for the final two weeks of the process (August 4 - 17). The remaining prefecture, Golfe, as well as Togo Commune, will receive separate kits for use during the first two weeks of the period.

¶3. Each registration kit includes a laptop computer, camera, printer, small generator to charge the laptop battery (Togo is experiencing severe power cuts nationwide), CDs, printer paper, card lamination materials, pens, and several forms used to document the process. After each voter's information is entered into the computer, it produces a card with the voter's name, photo, birth date, I.D. number, and a computerized scanning strip. The voter card is delivered to its owner on the spot.

¶4. Each voter registration station is staffed by computer operators (although in some cases, only one operator has shown up to work) and by a Voter List and Card Committee (CLC). The CLC consists of seven political party representatives, two from the RPT and one from each of five opposition parties (UFC, CAR, CDPA, PDR, and CPP). These party representatives work together to set up each site at 7am and close it down at 4pm each day, seven days a week. The CLC also ensures that the registration process conforms to the provisions of the Electoral Code, signs each voter card, and writes a report at the end of each day documenting the day's activities.

¶5. The first week saw no allegations of fraud, and CLC members cooperated well to administer the station. In

addition, kit technicians were readily available to repair minor technical problems with equipment. However, mechanical and logistical flaws at some sites obstructed the process. Some of the insufficiencies reported were as follows:

-- Delay in Deployment of Kits: At some sites, particularly in the South, kits were not delivered until mid-morning on the first day of registration. At other sites, they were not delivered until the second day. As a result, some stations were not fully operational until the third day of the official registration process. CENI Vice President James Amalgo explained that the delay was caused by the fact that some kits were used until the Saturday before the registration began to train the computer operators. Before being deployed to registration centers, these kits needed to be reinitialized, he said, a process that took longer than expected. The CENI has said that it is prepared, if necessary, to extend the registration period by a day or two to make up for the delay.

-- Lack of Payment for CLC Members: Some CLC members at sites have threatened to strike if their payment issues are not resolved. CLC members were promised per diem for travel during their pre-election training as well as a salary of 2000 CFA (\$4) per day. However, none of them have received any money. In addition, CLC members have asked the CENI for a salary increase, requesting salaries comparable to the daily 5000 CFA (\$10) payment that computer operators at each site will receive. In response, the CENI has issued a communiqué asking prefects to send the names of the CLC members in their prefectures to the CENI in order to expedite payment.

-- Movement of Equipment Without CENI Approval: The CENI has pre-assigned each computer to a specific registration site. Reportedly, some administrators have haphazardly moved computers from one site to another, disrupting the CENI's tracking system. Computers were moved to accommodate sites with computers that had problems and is not associated with any attempted obstruction of the registration process.

-- Lack of Fuel: Some registration sites reported that their generators ran out of fuel and that CLC members had to pay for fuel themselves. The CENI has responded by clarifying that the generators, which were meant for charging the computer battery, were improperly used to operate the full kits for hours at a time, resulting in a shortage of fuel.

-- Misunderstanding about Lome Resignation Period: Lome's registration closes at the end of the first two weeks of the registration period, but some citizens had believed, and some likely still believe, that Lome would be open for registration for a full month. The misunderstanding is due to weak awareness-raising about the procedure in Lome and could result in low turn-out at Lome sites if corrective measures are not taken.

-- Lack of awareness about I.D. requirements: The media and public have criticized the CENI for not adequately advertising the fact that citizens do not need identity documents to register. Some sites have attributed their low turn out to this fact. Togo's Electoral Code allows a prospective voter to register without identity documents if a traditional chief or two witnesses are able to verify the voter's identity.

-- Missing equipment: Other complaints included missing or stolen printer cartridges, CD, pens, and other kit items at some sites.

16. Embassy Lome organized its own internal registration observation effort, deploying four teams of Embassy personnel to separate geographic areas in the Maritime region. Over a three day period (July 18-20), the teams confirmed that the problems reported by the media and public listed above did exist at many of the sites visited. In addition, Embassy observers discovered other concerns. Some of the sites, for example, had produced voter cards with blurry or dark

photographs. At these locations, some registration administrators said they would contact the individuals registered to re-issue their cards. The poor quality photos resulted, in large part, from the lack of adequate light at the sites, which are all school rooms. Moreover, the Embassy team noted that sites in remote villages were experiencing low turn-out. Several site administrators told Embassy personnel that this was probably due to a lack of awareness-raising in these areas about the registration process. In addition, in zone B areas, where registration will begin in one week, residents were unaware of the registration process. Moreover, in these areas Embassy observers did not see CENI posters or other signs of awareness-raising efforts. The Ambassador, who observed some of the sites himself, shared the findings of Embassy observation teams with the CENI at meetings on July 19 and July 23. At both of these meetings, the CENI engaged the international community in discussions about how to find solutions to the flaws apparent at the start of the registration process. On July 20, the CENI issued public notices that were broadcast and published widely and addressed the following shortcomings: the lack of awareness about I.D. requirements; misunderstandings about the Lome registration period; lack of payment for CLC members; the movement of kits without CENI approval; and the technical and mechanical flaws observed during the start of the registration period. An additional CENI public notice released on the same day underscored the rule that CLC members at registration sites can be replaced only at the specific request of their political party.

17. COMMENT: The registration problems have been most apparent in the Lome region, where the logistical challenges are greatest because of the large population concentration. Lome is also where the opposition has its heaviest representation, thus raising suspicions of foul play. It will be important for the GOT and the CENI to take pro-active measures to address the registration problems as the upcoming elections are the centerpiece of the ongoing reform process.  
END COMMENT.  
DUNN